

A SNAPSHOT OF

ELECTRONIC HEALTH RECORD DEMONSTRATION PROJECT



Overview

The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) Electronic Health Record (EHR) Demonstration Project is a five-year, Medicare project that will provide incentive payments to physicians for using certified electronic health records to improve the quality of patient care. The goal is to revolutionize the way health care information is managed, producing better health outcomes and greater patient satisfaction. This project is a major step toward the President's goal of most Americans having access to a secure, interoperable EHR by 2014.

Georgia is among the 12 states selected by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services to participate in the program. The project will be implemented in two phases, with Phase 1 beginning in four sites this fall and Phase II beginning in the other eight sites in the fall of 2009. Georgia has been selected as a Phase II Community.

The EHR project will also study the impact of EHR adoption among targeted physicians on quality of care. Findings from the demonstration will help determine the role of EHRs in delivering high-quality care and reducing errors.

CMS's Role

The nuts and bolts of the project will be handled by CMS. They will choose the practices from among the eligible applicants. Incentives will go directly from CMS to the primary care physicians in the practices it selects. CMS will randomly divide the 200 practices selected into an experimental group (receive incentive) and a control group (no incentive).

The Role the Georgia EHR Community Partnership

The Georgia EHR Community Partnership, formed earlier this year, is a group of stakeholders (38 at present) interested in developing health information technology in the state. The partners include commercial health plans, hospitals, physician practices and others, all willing to add to the incentives that CMS will provide. Through the Georgia EHR Community Partnership, DCH and its partners will:

- offer support to help the physicians learn about EHRs and connect with vendors
- engage the physician practices to help them through the recruitment process.

DCH also will help CMS identify eligible providers and develop strategies to recruit providers for the program.

WHAT ARE ELECTRONIC HEALTH RECORDS?

An electronic health record is a computerized patient medical file. It can contain a variety of medical information including prescription records, test results, treatment histories, progress reports and X-rays.

WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF ELECTRONIC HEALTH RECORDS?

- Fewer adverse drug events, medical errors, and redundant tests and procedures because EHRs can ensure physicians have access to an accurate and complete health history;
- Faster diagnoses and treatment of serious illnesses with comprehensive information available at the touch of a screen;
- Timely provision of preventative care and services, such as health screenings, which can help reduce health care costs;
- Better communication between patients and physicians, giving patients enhanced access to timely information; and
- Shorter wait times for patients and lower operating costs for physicians through improved office efficiency.

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Incentive Payments

The basis for financial incentives will vary over the five-year period of the demonstration. In year one, payments will be based on physicians' use of certified EHR functions, with a higher dollar handout for more sophisticated health IT use, such as using EHRs to help with care management activities or to share a patient's records among providers. Certification of EHR function is provided by the Certification Commission for Healthcare Information Technology (CCHIT). Payment will be determined by a physician practice's score on an Office Systems Survey. During the first year, participants may earn a maximum of \$5,000 per physician or \$25,000 per practice.

After the second operational year, payments will be made to participating physician practices that are using CCHIT-certified EHRs and also reporting clinical quality measures for diseases (diabetes, congestive heart failure, coronary artery disease) and preventive services. Additional payments will be based on how the practice uses EHRs to change and improve the way it operates.

Practices that have not yet implemented certified EHRs or do not meet minimum use requirements by the end of the second year will be eliminated from the demonstration. Payments in this year may reach a maximum of \$8,000 per physician or \$40,000 per practice.

In years three to five, payments will be based on actual performance on clinical quality measures and the EHR functions used by the practice. Payments may total up to \$15,000 per physician or \$75,000 per practices in each of these three years.

Additional Information

For more information on how to get involved in Georgia EHR Partnership send inquiries to HITT@dch.ga.gov or call the DCH Office of HITT at 404-656-7282. Additional information can also be obtained from the CMS demo project website at http://www.cms.hhs.gov/DemoProjectsEvalRpts/downloads/2008_Electronic_Health_Records_Demonstration.pdf.